



THE IRON WAY (Decimation in D - Venice)

Shipsides, D. (Author), & Beggs, N. (Author). (2017). THE IRON WAY (Decimation in D - Venice). Performance

[Link to publication record in Ulster University Research Portal](#)

Publication Status:

Published (in print/issue): 14/05/2017

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via Ulster University's Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The Research Portal is Ulster University's institutional repository that provides access to Ulster's research outputs. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact pure-support@ulster.ac.uk.

Shipsides and Beggs Projects - THE IRON WAY. Pre-Fix, Venice

[Home](#)[CV & contact](#)[Texts](#)[Bibliography](#)[Projects](#)**THE IRON WAY** (Originally titled 'Decimation in D')

Shipsides and Beggs Projects

Performance of music, sound, spoken word, video and animation.

Approx 90 min

2017

Shipsides and Beggs Projects**PRE-FIX Microclima / Catalyst Arts. Serra Dei Giardini, Venice Biennale, 2017**

Audio Visual performance/happening performed at Microclima in the Giardini della Biennale, Venice, commissioned by Catalyst Arts.

A socio-phenomenological, transversal audio-visual work exploring the altitude, geo-political legacies, brutalities and strange poetics of the Dolomites' mountain frontier of World War 1. The spine of this work processes the elevation data gathered from the frontier into a soundscape which connects and laterally morphs 'pata-perceptively into songs, anecdotes and visual art.

Above images: 1,3,4,5,7,8,9,11 credit Danto Productions

THE IRON WAY edits A, B and C:**Video documentation edited into new video works:**

This gives a good sense of the performance but works better as three short stand-alone edited artworks. A lot of the material has been edited out to develop a simpler coherency in the content and form.

Credits: Live, raw video and audio footage: Danto Productions.

All other footage, audio and editing: Shipsides and Beggs Projects.

THE IRON WAY. Edit part A.

<https://vimeo.com/252060855>

THE IRON WAY. Part A.

15:56



THE IRON WAY. Edit part B.

<https://vimeo.com/253665319>

THE IRON WAY. Part B.

12:29



THE IRON WAY. Edit part C.

<https://vimeo.com/253667318>

THE IRON WAY. Part C.

10:45 |



Decimation in D parts 1,2,3,4 and 5: Video documentation of the full event:

This gives a good document as to the full performance and all the material within the work.

NB; Some sections are reconstructed as the live recording was a not a complete recording of the full duration of the event.

Credits: Live, raw video and audio footage: Danto Productions.

All other footage, audio and editing: Shipsides and Beggs Projects.

Decimation in D. Part 1 (of 5)

<https://vimeo.com/247505910>

Decimation in D. Part 1 (of 5)

13:01 |



NB Over the Mountain is over-dubbed from a performance at Le Bel Ordinaire, Pau 2016

Decimation in D. Part 2 (of 5)

<https://vimeo.com/246472025>

Decimation in D. Part 2 (of 5)

22:53



Decimation in D. Part 3 (of 5)

<https://vimeo.com/245453362>

Decimation in D. Part 3 (of 5)

09:12



Decimation in D. Part 4 (of 5)

<https://vimeo.com/249078118>

Decimation in D. Part 4 (of 5)

23:49



NB. Some vaguely mature material.

NB. Due to lack of live recording (this part was missed) the Abject Summit section is over-dubbed from a talk at the Kendal Mountain Festival in 2016 - hence the difference in sound quality and lack live footage. All the visuals in the 'missing' section are from the material projected during this Venice performance.

Decimation in D. Part 5 (of 5)

<https://vimeo.com/248463234>

Decimation in D. Part 5 (of 5)



NB. WAR PIGS is over-dubbed from a performance at L'Atelier, Nantes in 2017.

The performance of the Decimation in D partition was interwoven with the following songs:

Going Across the Mountain (Old Timer)

Going over the Top (SBP)

Frontier Soldier (SBP)

Still Not Out Of The Woods (SBP)

Mountain Bird (SBP)

War Pigs (Black Sabbath)

Poor Pilgrim of Sorrow (Old Timer)

Just beyond the Border (SBP)

Withdrawing from the Visual (SBP)

Video works included in the live performance (or re-edited into the new work are)

BIVACCO

MASS HERMIT VOLUME

YUPA STAR

ZOMBIE LINE

STILL NOT OUT OF THE WOODS

SHUMMIT

WAR PIGS - KARAOKE

NOTTANUM – WAR PIGS

MORTAR|DEVICE

The work is an open-work and will be re-developed and re-performed to explore specific themes or research in different contexts and directions – each time generating new material for further research.

Text:

Through, video, music, sound and spoken-word this performance folds together new artworks with existing artworks, songs and materials. In many aspects this performance is a conscious attempt to create a new space across the formats of a music gig, an artist's talk, a video screening and a 'live happening'. The new aspects of this work develop long standing themes, topics and research from the wider Still Not Out Of The Woods umbrella project and material.

In particular, this work re-visits our Italian Dolomites research (which began in 2009) stemming from our interest and activity in climbing Via Ferrata (see [BIVACCO](#)) and connecting again with the WW1

histories of the Dolomite's mountainous war frontier. The core element of Decimation in D takes the line of the WW1 Italian frontier from the Adriatic sea to the highest point in the Dolomites, which is Mt. Marmolada (Punta Penia, 3343m) then right across through the mountains to the west coast. Transcoding a data-set derived from frontier's elevation heights, taken at regular points of this border, into sound (using the segmenting principle in sheet-music which is French is called partition). The term partition also clearly refers to concepts of geo-political separations of borders and the construct of the nation-state. This audio process produces a framework which literally sounds out that geopolitical and topological frontier. We then use that audio framework, in a series of partitions, to weave in existing and new songs (some our own, some covers of 'old timer' or modern or popular songs from the genres of folk, rock and pop) using sound-scaping as bridging between sections. The initial sound-scaping begins with Neal using a small iron shrapnel ball, which was found on Marmolada, to roll along his guitar strings generating a peculiar and particular sound. Other sound-scaping comes from recordings developed from the sound of karabiners running up the tensioned steel via ferrata wires in the mountains.

Around this there are 'artist talk' style spoken-word elements which speak to the video and still images which are being projected and introduce or inform about the songs and sound we perform. It has a very casual, open style which at times is hopefully also humorous. This is serious and at times dark material but we give ourselves licence to make play with it. In fact the strange tree motif (of two hands placed together) references this strange playfulness – the origin of the tree motif coming from WW1 no-mans-land observation points which were designed to look like bombed out tree trunks. The spoken-word introduces the ideas of research and process in terms of the subject matter of geo-political culture and politics – based around histories and experiential research. So we discuss ideas of the Via Ferrata (meaning Iron Way) as a poetic way into articulations around Fascism and Modernism, but also as a way out of those oppressive ways, into imagining future music and communications – the guitar string, the counter-culture, electronic music (the oscillator) and the internet. The talk speaks of a lightning strike we encountered on Marmolada, to which we both responded with small artworks which here lead us, through a star motif, to discuss a link between the romantic sublime of mountainous nature with it's awe, terror and fear, to a more street level sublime terror of Northern Irish paramilitaries - in particular the British Loyalist terror groups UDA and UFF.

We then discuss ideas around the realities and concepts of Europe or Europa (including a discussion on the most bombed hotel in Europe, the Europa Hotel in Belfast) and combine this with a 'demoralisation' of the Summit – so that we might imagine an abject summit (see SHUMMIT), where during WW1 mountains were tunnelled to explode the enemy's strategic summit positions (see [YUPA STAR](#)). We then also come to some potential for re-articulating the concept of Europe (see YUPA, RURRP, YORP – the phonetic pronunciations of Europe by a two-year-old boy). From here we follow that period of history to discuss the idea of the bicycle (and also in another level, the guitar) as both a tool of individual emancipation and avant-garde motifs (e.g. Jarry and Duchamp). We juxtapose or integrate the idea of the wire with the bicycle – enclosure and mobility. But we also frame the bicycle as an agent of über masculinity and the supermalé, with both the Futurists and Ulster Volunteers (UVF) forming bicycle battalions (see [ZOMBIE LINE](#)). Steve Job's efficiency fuelled vision of the computer serving as the 'bicycle for the mind' then leads us into the era of mass communication, the media age and the rise of the notion of zombie-hood. All this chimes strongly with the contemporary situation where there seems to be a blind sleepwalk to the hard political right, towards fascism, towards deepening economic structures that drives and necessitates constant violence, categorical oppression and a regime of image rhetoric to condition society. In this sense the fulcrum of the Decimation in D frontier partition morphs into the Black Sabbath song War Pigs, re-versioned as an electronic karaoke track (see WAR PIGS) a hand made crankie film (see [Nottanum - War Pigs](#)) and followed by video works (see MORTAR|DEVICE) and further footage and audio which draws us off the mountain and deeply back into the woods.

The whole video projection itself (which acts mostly a silent movie to which we add the live sound track) constitutes a new video work. It purposely combines previous work (as indicated above) with newly edited footage and newly made video and animation material. At heart this project has been a major re-visiting of the archive of Italian research that we have undertaken and drawn from for many works. This working however returns us to the start of the research which began in 2009 on our first trip to the Dolomites (via Venice) and to woods in the foothills where we first made a STILL NOT OUT OF THE WOODS twig text work. In this sense it seemed pertinent to return to the region and present this material in Venice.

The actual performance began in a period of chaos as the heavens opened up with a heavy downpour of rain. So the whole event was scrambled to provide cover for the electrical equipment – but the show went on and the result seemed to be successful – in actuality, unusually for 'art performances', there was a call for an 'encore' which allowed us pertinently (in relation to the Venice Biennale) to perform Withdrawing from the Visual for which several members of the host organisation and Keef Winter spontaneously joined us in playing.





Zombie Mask for Decimation in D

Commercially printed flyer mask.

21x29cm

edition of 100

Shipsides and Beggs Projects 2017

Kindly supported by the British Council and ACNI